

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4632
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: IS, PLO, XF
SUBJECT: ISRAELI PRESS ON NY TIMES STORY: GENEVA WITHOUT THE PLO

1. NEW YORK TIMES STORY (TANNER) JANUARY 26 THAT EGYPT, SYRIA, AND JORDAN ARE APPARENTLY WILLING TO START THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT A PALESTINIAN DELEGATION HAS PREDICTABLY SPAWNED A SPATE OF REPORTS, ANALYSIS AND EDITORIALS IN ISRAELI MEDIA. THE WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT FOR HAARETZ (MARGALIT) SAYS THAT THE U.S. WAS NOT SURPRISED BY THE REPORT AND CITES BOTH AMERICAN AND ISRAELI OFFICIALS AS HAVING NO FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT BEYOND PRESS REPORTS, BUT U.S. EXPERTS DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN CAIRO WILL YET COME UP WITH A DECISION ON PLO PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. DAVAR CITES JERUSALEM SOURCES AS STATING ISRAEL HAS NO GROUNDS ON WHICH TO VERIFY THE TANNER STORY, BUT FINDS IT A REASONABLE POSSIBILITY. THE STAND OF THE ARAB
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STATES WILL NO DOUBT BECOME CLEARER IN THE COURSE OF THE VISITS BY WALDHEIM AND VANCE, POLITICAL SOURCES REPORTEDLY FEEL.

2. DAVAR ALSO CARRIES A LENGTHY ANALYSIS (TADMOR) ENTITLED "GENEVA WITHOUT THE PLO." STARTING WITH THE SOVIETS, TADMOR SAYS THAT THEY BACKED AWAY FROM THE PLO "THE MOMENT THEY

REALIZED THAT DAMASCUS HAD ADOPTED THE EGYPTIAN-SAUDI STRATEGY." HAVING EARLIER OUTDONE THEMSELVES IN SUPPORTING THE PLO EVEN BEYOND THE LIMITS OF SOVIET SELF-INTEREST (BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THE PLO AT LEAST WOULD NEVER ACCEDE TO U.S. GOALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST), THE SOVETS HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF ASAD'S FIGHT AGAINST THE CURRENT PLO LEADERSHIP AND NOW CONCEDED TO WASHINGTON THAT THEY ARE WILLING TO FOREGO PLO PRESENCE AT THE FIRST STAGE OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. AS FOR THE PLO, THEY ARE TRAPPED BY THE ARABS AND ARE UNDERGOING A MODERATION PROCESS. ARAFAT, FAHOUM ET AL ARE WILLING TO MAKE TACTICAL COMPROMISES AND TO DECLARE THEIR READINESS TO ESTABLISH A WEST BANK/GAZA STATE--BUT NOT TO AMEND THE PALESTINIAN CHARTER OR TO GO TO GENEVA ON THE BASIS OF RESOLUTION 242. THIS AND THE FACT THAT THE ARABS ARE PRESSURING THE PLO ONLY BECAUSE THEY WILL DEMAND AN EXPLICIT AMERICAN UNDERTAKING RE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL MEAN THAT ISRAEL CAN TAKE ONLY SMALL COMFORT FROM A MEETING WITH THE CONFRONTATION STATES AT GENEVA, CONCLUDES TADMOR.

3. EDITORIALS IN DAVAR AND AL HAMISHMAR AGREE THAT THE GROUND IS BEING PREPARED FOR THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. DAVAR HOLDS OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ARABS MAY BE FLEXIBLE ON THE ISSUE OF PLO PARTICIPATION EVEN IN LATER STAGES OF THE GENEVA TALKS, WHILE AL HAMISHMAR URGES ISRAELI FLEXIBILITY AND WILLINGNESS FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE AT GENEVA.

4. COMMENT: THE REPORT THAT THERE MAY BE A GENEVA CONFERENCE WITHOUT THE PLO HAS BEEN RECEIVED HERE WITH SATISFACTION.

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AT THE SAME TIME, ISRAELIS ARE NO LESS CONCERNED THAN BEFORE THAT THE ARABS STILL MAY BE TRYING TO TRICK THEM AND WORLD OPINION.
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